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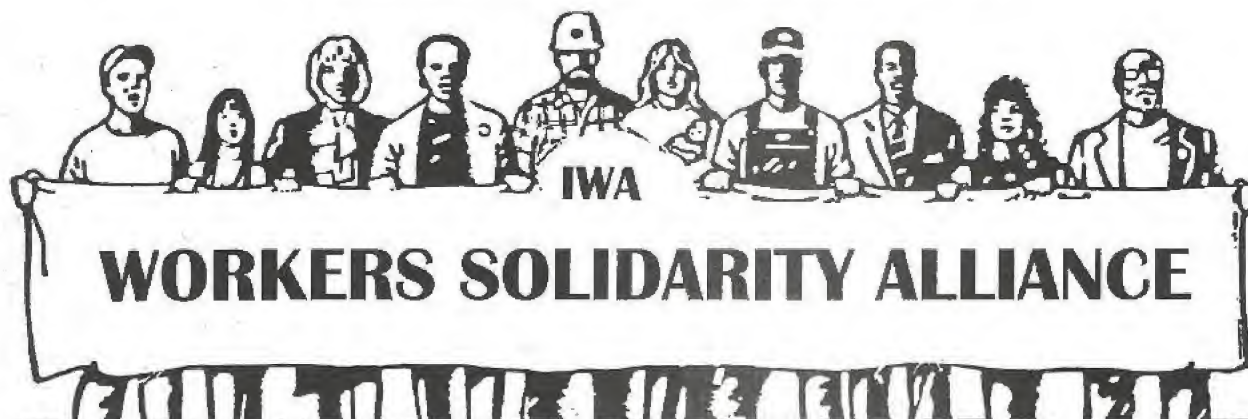
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Prison Labor In the USA



The primary reason that the United States government has not come out more strongly against prison labor in the Peoples Republic of China is that prison labor has become one of the fastest growing sectors of the U.S. economy. In the recent campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, one of the front-runner candidates, Senator Phil Gramm of Texas, said in a speech before the Heritage Foundation that "I'd like to turn our prisons into industrial parks." In Oregon, prison authorities reported sales of \$4.5 million worth of convict-made jeans called "Prison Blues." In California the prison system will soon be offering a competing line called "Gangsta Blues."

Phonebanks for marketing, construction facilities, small-scale factories, these are only some of the types of businesses the capitalists are locating in prisons around the nation. This is being done with the energetic cooperation of prison authorities, who in turn divide profits made from prisoner's labor (usually less than \$1 per hour). This cooperation is vital to the capitalist enterprises, since although the 13th Amendment outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude, it granted an exception for

convicted criminals. But it remains illegal for private companies to hire prisoners outright. They must instead reach an agreement with state prison systems to open prison-site workplaces.

Many companies that had previously sent work abroad to "maquiladora" assembly plants are now also taking advantage of prison labor. DPAS, a U.S. data processing company, recently closed its Mexican facility and opened a site at California's San Quentin prison.

"We have a captive labor force, a group of men who are dedicated, who want to work," DPAS owner Bob Tessler gushed to the British magazine "New Statesman". "That makes the whole business profitable. The DPAS workers are paid the current minimum wage of \$4.25 an hour, far below the starting wages for data-entry workers in the surrounding Bay Area.

The willingness of prisoners to participate in these programs is easily understood. It allows them to earn money and interrupts the monotony of prison life. In the past it was argued that such prison labor schemes played a part in the rehabilitation of criminals. Now, even this dubious justification has been

abandoned. The argument is simple: it makes money. It makes money for the capitalists who run the factories and for the bureaucrats who run the prisons. For the prisoners it kills time.

How has this effected labor outside of the prisons? Other than those Mexican workers mentioned above, the number of workers displaced by prison labor is growing. For example, the Wackenhut Corporation of Texas closed a plant which assembled computer circuit boards, laying off all 150 workers without severance pay, then immediately moved operations to the Lockhart Work Program Facility in Lockhart Texas, a "private prison" managed by a Wackenhut subsidiary. To quote a Wackenhut official: "Downsizing was appropriate if we are to remain competitive in the computer assembly market."

Most of the workers at the Brill Manufacturing Co.'s furniture plant in Michigan lost their \$5.65 an hour jobs when state prison inmates getting 56 cents an hour were hired in their stead.

In Ohio, prisoners at the Ross County Jail were hired to assemble parts for Honda. The United Auto Workers, upon learning of this, forced Honda to close this prison operation.

Prison inmates have been employed as stockers at the Toy R Us retail store just outside of Chicago. Juvenile offenders have been hired for pennies to take reservations for TWA near Santa Barbara, etc. etc.

As prison populations across the country explode thanks to harsher sentencing laws and the continuing war on drugs, the growth of "private prisons" has expanded by 500% between 1985 and 1995. 18 companies have constructed or rehabbed 93 "private prisons" in the United States. All of these facilities operate profit-producing prison labor enterprises of one sort or another.

Coming at a time when funds for education and apprenticeship programs in prisons are being cut dramatically, always with the support of Republican and conservative Democratic politicians bought and paid for by the very capitalists operating the prison factories, it's clear that the capitalists now view prison labor in the same terms as the tyrants of China: as a cheap, easily controllable and highly-exploitable workforce.

The AFL-CIO, in confronting the growth of prison labor, has taken a moralistic position, claiming that prison workers are taking jobs from "honest citizens." This has been the position of the UAW opposing the Ohio Honda prison factory and the IBEW and UFCW in opposing the Chicago Toys 'R' Us use of prisoners as stockers. This makes the questionable assumptions that everyone in prison belongs in prison, and also that capitalists are susceptible to moralistic persuasion. Both assumptions are patently incorrect, since while at least some violent prisoners require segregation from society (at least until they can be cured), most prisoners are guilty of economic crimes or "moral" crimes, few of which require the kind of massive incarceration currently being enforced. And as for the capitalist's

susceptibility to moral arguments, perhaps the workers in Decatur, Illinois can be polled for their opinion on that supposition. Like part-time and temporary work, prison labor has become an undeniable fact in globalized capitalism, and the sooner organized labor wakes up to this situation the better we will be able to fix it to our advantage.

How would prison workers best be organized? Any decision in this regard would naturally come from the prison workers themselves. The one notable example of a past organizing attempt which should not be imitated would be the abortive Prison Organizing Project launched by the IWW in the mid-late 1980's. This project relied primarily on the organizing ability and luck of prisoner John Perotti, then imprisoned at the Lucasville correction center in Lucasville, Ohio. It is unknown what the overall goal and strategy of this attempt was. Perotti was energetic and appeared committed, but it is unclear what kind of planning went into his organizing. He was able to sign-up several other prisoners into the IWW, but what proportion of the prison workforce this constituted is unknown. What is known is what happened to him. John was subject to retaliation and reprisal almost immediately. He was beaten and tortured for an extended period of time, including long periods of lockdown in an isolation cell. Meanwhile the IWW was utterly unable to do anything to assist him in a significant way. At the time an internal debate within the IWW was underway over the same moralistic issues raised by the AFL-CIO, namely whether it was moral to organize "murderers and rapists" into the IWW. This internal turmoil, combined with the escalating attacks on Perotti display the utter folly of going into such a project unprepared for the possible consequences. The lessons to be learned from the P.O.P. are that:

1.) inside the prison the prison administration has absolute power to do whatever it wants; 2.) any leading organizer within the prison system will be attacked by the system; and 3.) an organization must exist on the outside which is capable of delivering assistance to the prisoners involved in some meaningful form. This organization must have sufficient dedicated resources to support both a legal defense for the prison organizers and a solidarity campaign against the capitalists. A corporate campaign strategy, one which focused on gaining improvements within the prison by attacking the capitalists on the outside, could work in conjunction with whatever limited tactics were possible inside by the prison workers (such as slow-downs, work-to-rule, etc.). In any case, protecting the prison workers from retaliation must be a primary goal. We don't want martyrs, we want respected, fairly-compensated prison workers.

Raising prisoners wages, while also demanding increased educational benefits for prison workers, would be a far more successful approach to dealing with the rising prison industries than preaching to the capitalists about fair play. The "fair play" the capitalists care about is when the players are facing them baseball bats.



New Leaders For the AFL-CIO

For the first time in the history of the American Federation of Labor a challenger has unseated the incumbent president. John Sweeney, former president of SEIU, defeated AFL-CIO president Tom Donahue in a campaign in which Sweeney promised to revitalize the 13 million member federation. As vice-presidents, Richard Trumka of the UMW and Linda Chavez-Thompson of AFSCME (the first woman to hold such a high office in the organization) will complete the top executive. Trumka is one of the youngest AFL-CIO vice-presidents, and Chavez-Thompson is first of latin-American ancestry.

Trumka is most noted for his role in the 1980's UMW Pittston strike, and for bringing the UMW into the AFL-CIO. Chavez-Thompson is most noted for her position in the Texas AFSCME as a stalwart functionary of the union.

Sweeney proclaimed the need for a "new direction" for the AFL-CIO upon assuming office. One of his first acts was to request the resignation of William Doherty, head of the American Institute of Free Labor Development, the international department of the federation primarily funded by the state-department and supportive of the repression of free unions in Latin America and elsewhere. The AIFLD was a vocal supporter of "free trade zones" in Latin America, even as the AFL-CIO openly opposed free trade.

What does Sweeney mean by a "new direction"? The replacement of Lane Kirkland, and Kirkland's hand-picked successor, could only be an improvement. Kirkland had essentially accepted the role as funeral director for organized labor in the USA. Sweeney/Trumka/Chavez-Thompson have expressed their refusal to also accept such a role. So, the "new direction" Sweeney speaks of will at least be "up" (in his opinion anyway). Three things have been either openly expressed or are in evidence based on actions:

- 1.) The AFL-CIO will adopt a more aggressive stance in dealing with union-busting employers (such as Gannett/Knight-Ridder in Detroit). It is also clear that these aggressive tactics will be closely controlled by the union professionals, the paid staff and bureaucrats.
- 2.) The AFL-CIO will adopt a much more active political strategy, as evidenced by the allocation of \$35 million in federation funds to unseat Republicans and support democrats.
- 3.) The AFL-CIO will devote a lot more resources to organizing than it has in the past, including the expansion of the Organizing Institute and this year's "Union Summer" in which the federation seeks to recruit college students as field organizers.

Will this "new direction" dramatically effect and enhance the prospects of the American Federation of Labor? The situation of the AFL-CIO is such that any action could only be an improvement. Yet action which fails to address the essential problems of organized labor in the USA, "business unionism", will do little of real benefit to the vast majority of the unorganized working class.

The AFL-CIO is an organization composed of almost universally top-down and/or ineffective national (called "international") unions, with a large number of active, and some militant, local unions with whom they are in almost constant war. Sweeney, while head of SEIU, proved himself an able leader in the service of the SEIU bureaucracy in their own conflicts with militant locals. He was noted for the speed with which he could impose a trusteeship should "loyal and trusted" leaders be replaced by "unpredictable" leaders of the rank and file. In short, if an election didn't go the way he wanted, he nullified the results and imposed dictatorship. There is no reason to believe he will behave any differently now that he has even more power.

The AFL-CIO's slavery to the Democratic Party is as complete now as it ever was, all fuming and "party-forming" aside (the new "Labor Party" should be renamed the "Labor Lobby"). It is as complete as that of

social-democratic union federations to the various SD parties around the world, without any of the accountability. Despite the betrayal over NAFTA, despite all threats of "forming a third party", \$35 million in tangible support speaks louder than whining.

The major failure of the AFL-CIO has been the failure to address the changing situation facing most working people, specifically the capitalists ending of any sort of security of employment. The rise of a contingent workforce has been the result of capitalist demands for "flexibility", meaning the flexibility to hire when there is work and lay-off when there is not, all without organized interference. Kirkland and the rest of bureaucracy accepted this situation long ago, even in industries such as automotive and steel where they had strong unions. There message to the bulk of the working class was: "you're on your own". Given their general image among working people as corrupt businessmen mainly concerned with taking workers money in the form of dues, which they mostly ARE, there is little wonder that the AFL-CIO has been steadily shrinking in size. Even their existing membership is largely disaffected and disinterested, the result of the adoption of the "service model" of unionism, where the union become basically as social-service provider that is primarily concerned with contract maintenance. Only of late the AFL-CIO has been a social service provider that is unable to deliver.

So Sweeney's goal appears to be to increase the federation's effectiveness as a service provider by adopting the "organizing model" of unionism. Unfortunately this model in no way increases the empowerment of the working class, whether in or out of the federation. It does increase the size and power of the federation staff, and helps to facilitate Sweeney's

second goal, which is to restore the AFL-CIO as a major player in capitalist power politics.

Will this be of service to the working class? In some ways yes. An increase in the power of the AFL-CIO could be the lifting of restrictive laws which hamper workplace organizing. Polls have indicated that upwards of 70% of the US working class would like to have a union in their workplace. Under current legal restrictions however, the risk of loss of employment is too high for most to attempt it. Likewise a dramatic increase in the minimum wage would improve conditions for many of the lowest paid workers. So, an increase in the power of the AFL-CIO could mean some significant improvements. At the same time the indications from the new leadership of the federation are that, if anything, the second biggest factor that keeps people from joining unions, the ridiculously high cost of union membership dues, will only increase as the size and activity of the bureaucracy increases. At the same time, there is no indication that union members will see any significant increase in their power to direct the course and activity of the union. If Sweeney's track record is any indication, that will probably top out at or about the same level as private citizens have over the direction of the Federal Government (with the added treat of having any

disagreeable votes "nullified" by the leadership).

It's more than a little foolish to assume that an organization as vast and corrupt as the AFL-CIO could ever be transformed into a structure capable of fulfilling the needs of the working class. Sweeney himself has expressed surprise over the difficulty of imposing even the minor and managerial reforms he is pushing. The top bureaucracy and all it's appendages is, like a living organism, primarily concerned with it's own survival. Any force which is seen as a threat to that survival, such as an empowered membership, is The Enemy. Like a vast governmental office, the AFL-CIO headquarters sits in Washington D.C., as much a part of the government as the Labor Department with which it is in such close contact and often exchanges employees. That this appendage of the government could be transformed into a sword of the working class, capable of addressing the desperate needs of workers in Detroit, Decatur and Denver, is less than unlikely, it's impossible. Particular if such a transformation is the farthest thing from your mind, which I believe it is from that of Sweeney.

Mike Kolhoff



Scapegoating Immigrants

Nativism, anti-immigrant feeling, has been a recurring sickness in American society. It has resurfaced again in recent legislation at both the state and federal level aimed purportedly at "stopping the flood of illegal aliens", but in fact aimed against all immigrants, both illegal and legal. Legislation eliminating financial aid funds for education for legal immigrants is going through Congress currently. This means that legal, tax-paying immigrants will no longer have access to federal financial aid (the result of a device called "deeming" in which legal immigrants sponsor's income is factored into their needs tests).

The ignorance and mean-spiritedness of this attack is shown clearly by a study recently released by the University of Maryland. This study, written by University of Maryland professor Julian Simon, indicates that immigrants put far more into the US economy than they take out in social services, and that immigrants use less social services than the average native-born citizen.

The most recent data shows that immigrant families put on average \$2,500 into the pockets of the native-born from excess taxes over public services. In welfare payments, the average immigrant family received \$1,404 in services for their first five years in the country. Native-born families on welfare averaged \$2,279.

The study also indicated that the number of illegal immigrants in the US--estimated at 3.2 million--is not substantially higher than that of a decade before. This refutes the "illegal crisis" claims of the anti-immigrant organizations, which assert that illegal immigration is a "growing problem".

The study offers clear evidence that the accusations of the anti-immigrant forces that immigrants constitute an unreasonable burden on resources is patently false. In fact, new immigrants are more concentrated in the youthful labor-force age group, when people

contribute more to the public coffers than they draw out. Natural resources and the environment are not at risk from immigration, but from native capitalists who value high profits over the public good.



IWA NEWS

Norsk Syndikalistisk Forbund (Norway)

The Norwegian Section of the IWA, the NSF, reports victory in their solidarity campaign to support workers at the Scandinavian Airlines System Hotel in Oslo. Management had fired 18 workers and refused to negotiate fixed contracts for any workers. An industrial tribunal in Oslo has found all 18 dismissals to be invalid. The SAS Hotel management has appealed the ruling, but there are signs that they are at last willing to deal with the union to improve the climate at the Hotel.

The NSF reports that the victory can be also be seen as a victory for the anti-authoritarian traditions of the union: Building a safe environment among the workers, high local activity, a direct action attitude to solving problems, firm solidarity among workers of different colors, no full-time shop stewards and an efficient use of the press and media

Confederacion Nationale du Travail (France)

Comrades in the CNT-F report that an entire local union formerly affiliated with the CFTD and employed in the public sector has decided to affiliate with the IWA confederation. This, coming in the wake of the high-profile position taken by the CNT-F in the recent General Strike indicates that our French comrades are entering a period of growth and renewal.

During the General Strike, CNT-F union sections in the public sector (education, postal and health primarily) were in the forefront of the mobilizations. And although support for the General Strike was lacking in the private sector as a rule, the two enterprise where the CNT-F had unions sections did participate in the strike. The CNT-F also received wide

press and media coverage during the course of the struggle. Unfortunately this has also meant increasing harassment from the police and the Parti Socialiste (which is particularly concerned with increased syndicalist influence in the Universities).

*(see further notes on page 30)

Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores (Spain)

Comrades in the Spanish CNT-AIT report a victory in their fight to gain the reinstatement of a CNT delegate employed at Iberia Airlines, Madrid. He had been suspended from work for 21 days without pay. WSA received this report from our Spanish comrades: "In the case of Iberia Airlines, they have retreated. This because of many solidarity activities, but especially the international ones (they are still surprised!). So, this affair has been satisfactorily resolved for the moment."

We also received notice that police special forces burst into the CNT-AIT headquarters on April 12th, demanding original copies of documents relating to activities in 1993. A federal judge accompanied the police. When the comrades who were in the office refused to cooperate with these fascist tactics, twelve of them were arrested. Although all were later freed, this action is viewed by our comrades as part of a growing campaign to hinder their right to pursue and independent and critical unionist position in Spain. We ask that you send a letter protesting these police and judicial actions to:

President Del Gobierno
Complejo de Moncloa
28071 Madrid SPAIN
FAX: 34-1-5330271

Freie Arbeiterinnen Union (Germany)

A major activity being organized by our German comrades is a boycott campaign against "Lebensbaum/Finca Irlanda," a coffee producer from

Mexico that sells a large amount of sugar in Germany. The reason for the boycott concerns the poor working conditions and living conditions of the workers employed at Finca Irlanda.

FAU comrades are also very active in establishing East/West contacts with workers and groups in the former Soviet Bloc. They have been instrumental in setting up meetings and conferences with East European comrades.

IWA Report on the International Trade Union Conference, Kathmandu, Nepal

As we decided at the plenary in London, the IWA sent a delegation of two people to this conference. The conference was organized by the GEFONT (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions) which invited the IWA. The reason for this was the contacts between GEFONT and the IWA which started with the support activities for the UCAR strike in Kathmandu in 1993.

There were 63 participants from 15 countries. They included delegates from Bangladesh, India, Hong Kong, Nepal, Pakistan, Japan, Malaysia, Phillipines, South Korea, Sri Lanka and Taiwan. The delegates represented trade unions, union federations (some linked to Communist Parties), workers centers, institutes and regional organizations of the Asia-Pacific.

IWA delegates visited two brick-making factories, where management attempted to paint a rosy situation of working conditions. After the tour, IWA comrades were able to talk with union representatives on the bus ride back. Naturally the unionists had a much different viewpoint from that of management. The delegates missed the next days tour of a cement factory and instead met with Nurul Anwar, general secretary of the Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labor Federation. He showed great interest in anarcho-syndicalism and the IWA. He told the

IWA delegates something of his organization, which includes approximately 10,000 members.

The conference was divided into two blocks. First, national reports were delivered which informed about the economic, political and social situation in each participating country, with special attention given to the privatization/liberalization policies of globalized capital. Despite the obvious differences in development between the countries, there were nonetheless common, fundamental problems all shared. These problems are caused by the multi-(or trans)-national corporations which use strategies of exploitation against workers on a worldwide basis. As a means of doing this, international capital uses the IMF and the World Bank particularly. The workers of the so-called "Third World", including those in Asia, suffer a great deal from it. The sale of the workforces of the poorest countries has long ago reached the level of modern slavery. The "Free Trade Zones" for example, which have been installed or are being installed all over Asia, create entire regions for the multi-nationals where they alone have the power to say what is done. In Sri Lanka alone more than 400,000 people work in these zones. The multi-nationals dictate all conditions of work and life of the employees there. Organizing unions is generally not allowed. If there is too much resistance from the workers, or if the government tries to guarantee some minimum standards of living, the corporations just move to the next country. So-called "privatization" means nothing more than subduing the entire economies of the countries under the rule of the multinational capitalists.

Lack of education, religious dogmatism, repressive regimes, migrations, seasonal and child labor are only some of the problems of union work in Asia which were discussed at the conference. In

working groups the delegates discussed the different situations in their countries and the possibilities of learning from each other to find answers and a global strategy for unions. Action plans were worked out for closer cooperation in their regions and countries. Points of major importance were education and better organizing for women workers. All delegates agreed that a real pro-worker unionism to be the most effective approach for union work. It was underlined that an international cooperation between labor organizations is very necessary and the only way to fight against capitalism. Only by uniting is there a possibility for success and finally victory over the capitalist system.

Ideologically the conference was not as dogmatic as we expected it to be. Certainly different unions like GEFONT and KMU (Phillipines) and several Indian unions are more or less linked to marxism and communist parties, but nevertheless there was a free and undogmatic exchange of information and experiences, which were mainly without polemics. It was only about the proposed declaration which had been worked out by a group of delegates was there a long and intense discussion. Union officials and party leaders didn't accept the demand for the independence of the unions from political parties. But I think everybody, including the anarcho-syndicalists, was satisfied with the compromise which was found after a while. We were very surprised at the radical point of view and clear analysis of the participating trade unionists. There was no reformism at all.

Accordingly there was some interest in the speech given by an IWA delegate about anarcho-syndicalism and the IWA. Some participants expressed that it was a new idea for them and that they were very much interested in learning more about it. A discussion meeting was

organized and participants from Nepal, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India attended. Some expressed profound interest in the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism and the IWA, and the delegate from the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh invited IWA delegates to visit and expressed interest in joining the IWA.

This conference was of much importance for the IWA. Anarcho-syndicalism as a theory and practice has appeared in public in Asia again. We will see how relations develop.

Workers Solidarity Alliance

New York/New Jersey WSA

1996 has been a very active year for the NY-NJ area group of WSA. Since the beginning of the year we have held twice-monthly discussion meetings. The topics vary from meeting to meeting and generally deal with both topical and theoretical matters. The discussion meetings are held the second and fourth Mondays at 339 Lafayette St, Room 202 (corner of Bleecker and Lafayette Streets in lower Manhattan).

In February 1996 WSA organized a picket line in front of Ganis Brothers, an importer of Bengali Titas Apparel ready made clothes. This picket was one of many world-wide actions in support of the Bengali National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) who were engaged in a fight with Titas Apparel. In response to our picket and the international publicity given the Titas struggle, Ganis Brothers wrote to us stating their intention not to continue to market Titas-made garments until the struggle was resolved.

In April of 1996 one of our members, who is also the WSA Northeast Regional Delegate, spoke on anarcho-feminism at a women's conference in Oneonta, New York. Also in April a WSA member participated in a panel discussion on workers' control at the

annual Socialist Scholars Conference. About 50 people, mainly DeLeonists of sorts, attended the discussion.

On April 30th we organized a slide show and talk, "A Las Barricadas" (To the Barricades) in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution. We highlighted the key role of the anarcho-unionists of the 2 million member CNT and how the events of 1936 were more about social revolution than civil war. 40 people attended this event.

In late June we participated in a small forum of about 25 people on the "Struggle for Workers' Democracy".

Shortly after we learned about the firing of Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) member Miriam Fried by Walden Books in Philadelphia, NY/NJ WSA organized two picket lines at Borders Books in Brooklyn on her behalf. This was in July. A third WSA initiated picket was held in July to support of the right of Walden/Borders workers to organize.

In an effort to help build solidarity for our friends in the Nigerian Awareness League, July also saw a NY/NJ-initiated campaign to raise \$2000 to purchase a computer and equipment to improve communications.

In further commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution and the important role played by women, we organized a forum featuring the documentary "Toda Ae La Vida" (All of Our Lives). This film was an account of the role of the anarchist "Mujeres Libres" (Free Women) in the liberation of women's lives as told by the participants. 35 people attended this forum where one of our members gave an informative and moving presentation.

As for the information super highway, our members have been instrumental in setting up a web site for the rapid transmitting and receiving of news and information. To see the WSA web pages, set your web browser to:

<http://www.dorsai.org/agony/wsa>

Lansing, Michigan-WSA

Activities in the Lansing area have included working with local anarchists and activists to support the struggle of imprisoned black activist Mumia Abu Jamal and the national and international struggle to stop his execution.

We have also been directly involved in the organizing effort of part-time clerical technical workers at Lansing Community College, an effort which has succeeded in building a union for those workers.

Other organizing efforts have included aid and solidarity for janitorial workers employed by a private contractor working for the city of Lansing cleaning parking ramps. For this we had a flyer translated into Laotian and Vietnamese. We also participated in an effort by clerks at Total Petroleum, a local gas station/convenience store chain, to form a union. That effort is still underway.

We have organized several educational forums, including discussions of the films "Salt of the Earth", concerning a miners strike in the southwest United States, and "The Uprising of 1934", about a millworkers general strike in the southern United States.

ORGANIZING UPDATES

LCC-Clerical Technical Union

The Lansing Community College Clerical-Technical Union (LCC-CTU) won a state-certified representation election in November of 1995. LCC-CTU is an independent union organized on syndicalist principles. It organizes 180 part-time clerical and technical workers at Michigan's second largest community college. In the election, LCC-CTU was approved by 92% of the voting workers.

Contract negotiations have been going on since January 1996, and a tentative agreement should be presented to the union members before the end of July. LCC-CTU is demanding basic benefits which previously had been denied to part-time CTs, including sick pay, holiday pay, grievance procedures and health insurance.

LCC-CTU organizers have also established contacts with workers at other area colleges without union organizations. The ultimate goal is to build on the success at LCC and increase the union's membership by a concerted organizing campaign in the local community.

Temp Workers Union

The San Francisco Temp Workers Union is still alive and hopes to be doing well soon. Since the loss of the union hiring hall and office, membership has decreased from a high point of 250 workers to around 50 currently. At present the focus of activity is in raising sufficient funding to re-establish the hiring hall and begin operations again. The goal is to establish a stable hiring hall which will work as a fair alternative to the capitalist temp agencies, giving temp workers higher wages and more control over their work.

Texas Prisoners Labor Union

" The Texas Prisoners Labor Union is established to provide Inmate Laborers with a social and political forum from which to promote the principles of social justice in a manner consistent with Human Rights

" The Texas Penal Colony is one of the most expansive industries in the United States, however, while the populations have swelled to over capacity, the Texas Correctional Industries programs have not kept in step, as a result basic concepts of imprisonment in Texas remain unchanged from the prior plantation dictates that induce slavery. Inmate

Laborers in Texas are wholly uncompensated for their work and conditions remain barbaric in spite of twenty years of formal litigation, offering inmate Laborers little hope for the future. There are no effective programs which would allow for an environment wherein rehabilitation and productivity are synonymous, therefore those of us who remain confined within the Penal Colony are doomed to remain chained to the revolving door that has long become the accepted policy of incarceration in Texas. Legislators are happy to accept this concept of incarceration as it provides Texans with an ever growing industry, which in turn provides the citizens of Texas with jobs in various areas of corrections. This insane policy must be stopped and it is up to us to stop it. We must bind together so as to form a political base from which we may collectively assert our Human Rights and negotiate collective bargaining for improved working and living conditions, wages and rehabilitative programs that will allow us to develop skills and habits which will aid us in once again entering society as responsible and productive citizens. Each day the current Texas government is stripping more and more away from us and will continue to do so until there is nothing left. Only "WE" can stop this onslaught against human rights and social justice. Only "WE" can help ourselves"

(From a press release by TPLU)



Putting the Reins on Technology



Some self-management advocates argue that it is important not to involve the worker cooperative movement in attempts to instill social values. Worker cooperatives should be free to produce whatever they want--particularly given their general marginality and the difficulty they experience in obtaining financing, skilled workers and management, and adequate markets. For those who have experienced the difficulty of developing successful examples of self-management, this argument has some clear force. On the other hand, those in the ecology movement or those who espouse an appropriate technology which is neither capital nor energy intensive frequently have a pronounced interest in creating more democratic forms of production. My own view is that the proponents of worker-managementshouldrecognize that the product does matter, and that worker-managers who cater to the prevailing technological fix only narrow the scope of their potential influence.

In the last ten years or so a powerful critique of the present thrust of technology has developed which is too important to be ignored. It steps outside of the prevailing assumptions regarding technology and critiques both its methods and its goals. An essay written in 1909 by C.R. Ashbee provisioned a number of central

themes. Writing of Indian village communities, he questioned whether technological progress has improved the quality of life. The essay anticipated the contemporary critique of technology by investigating whether machines have not created social costs greater than their benefits. This issue was echoed in the writings of Ivan Illich, who pointed out that labor-saving devices usually do not save labor. When production and maintenance time is factored into the overall life of a car, the average speed is reduced to five miles per hour. Likewise labor saving appliances, when the wage labor costs to consumers are factored in, end up substituting the labor required to earn them for whatever labor time is saved.

Technology and the Workplace

This analysis is powerful, because it suggests the irrationality inherent in the present commitment to technology. We sacrifice freedom in work in order to be able to purchase appliances, vehicles--the accoutrements of technology--which supposedly add to our sense of power. But the Faustian bargain is that we sacrifice the power to determine how or when we work and for what purpose. We can thus see how intimately related are the critique of technology and the critique of the

workplace, if we subject both to rational evaluation.

Technology and workplace democratization are closely related on several levels. As Harry Braverman has shown, technology has never been neutral when it comes to the workplace. The development of the technology of production owes far more to considerations of **efficiency of control** than it does to any abstract desire for efficiency as such. Work has become highly rationalized; mental work has been split off from manual work; jobs have become mechanized. All of this subjects workers to lower wage scales and makes them more replaceable through de-skilling, hence increasing managerial power over the workforce.

The development of technology has been fueled by the urge to dominate nature. The vision of vast extensions of human power and human perception has allied the quest for scientific knowledge with the quest for domination. And the result of this is a social order in which the control of technology and its magnification of human power has led naturally to the control of other human beings.

On the positive side, this means that freedom in work requires an appropriate technology, based on a human scale, where neither the technology nor the organization of

work make workers into machine tenders. Any efforts to create freedom in work must bring the present runaway technology under control. Moreover, the lack of concern for human beings as workers is of a piece with the manipulation of human beings as consumers: passive workers, following orders, and passive consumers, advertised into buying. Just as there should be worker control, so there should be consumer control, so that products last, are reasonably priced, and meet needs as defined by consumers, not by the producers. Technology in general, not simply its application in the workplace, needs to come under democratic control.

We live in a society which is fragmented and devoid of the stability, rootedness in place, localism and cultural institutions which together can provide for emotional security. In this fragmenting society, people addictively turn to massive industrial technology to compensate for their lack of power and emotional security. It is hence not enough to combat this technology without also seeking to change the social and political landscape by returning power to the local level and in the process building community. **The answer to our runaway technology is social reconstruction.**

C. George Benello

From: **From the Ground Up- Essays on Grassroots & Workplace Democracy**

1992, South End Press, Boston, Mass.



Union Democracy: A personal experience

When people first formed unions, they were groups of people employed at the same task who decided they could get more from the bosses acting collectively than they could individually. These early unions used direct democracy as their decision-making process, meaning that the assembled membership voted directly on what the union would do and how it would be done. Delegates were chosen from the membership to carry out specific tasks (such as negotiating with bosses or delivering the workers demands) and these delegates were solely answerable to the rank and file membership which empowered them. This is the natural way for unions to function, as can be seen even today when newly organized unions often start out functioning in this manner.

The question has to be: How are these instinctively democratic structures transformed into the hierarchical (and usually patriarchal) business unions which are the contemporary norm?

In observing this situation it becomes clear that the legalistic system of labor relations encourages the establishment of an elite of union officials, experts in these legalistic methods who use information and access to information as a means of control, centralizing union power into their own hands at the expense of the membership and against the membership's democratic instincts.

In labor unions, as in virtually all other forms of organization, centralized power has a negative effect on the functioning of the organization. It weakens the labor union by disempowering the rank and file membership, the reason the union

exists, in order to empower the leadership. It reproduces in the union the disempowerment most of us experience in society at large and the workplace in particular. It creates a natural distrust of union leaders, who seem as remote and unreachable as any other politician, and fosters in union leaders a mistrust and contempt for the union rank and file. For the leaders, this mistrust and contempt is a natural result of their position and power. In their minds, the membership must be unable to run the union, otherwise the leaders become redundant. If the membership is smart enough to run the union themselves, where is the need for officials? To the union leaders and bureaucrats, the membership becomes an amorphous mass which must be periodically whipped into a frenzy (usually around contract time) and kept under tight control the rest of the time. The rank and file becomes the "mushroom membership" (kept in the dark and covered in shit). No attempts are made to involve or energize the membership unless a crisis looms (as in the budget fiasco now facing SF State), and even then the thrust of their efforts amounts to little more than "pay your dues and support your leaders". In such situations, active members are drawn into the inner circle of the leadership (the Executive Committee at SF State) where they can be closely monitored and supervised. If they demonstrate a sufficiently compliant nature, they may be invited to become union leaders themselves.

The downward trajectory of such organizations is clear, and where they dominate there is a general decline in

unionism. Such organizations cannot deal effectively with the bosses, since their attention is divided equally between conducting collective bargaining and keeping a thumb on the membership. Trying to rally the support of a membership which is completely disempowered in their own organization is a hit or miss proposition. It's hard to rally behind a flag if you suspect the person holding the flag thinks you are a fool.

The formula for success in today's union struggles is obvious. From the successful Pittston coal strike to the recent victory of clerical-technical workers at Yale, the key ingredient has been an activated and empowered rank and file. This means a membership that knows they have control of their lives and their union, and this knowledge gives them the power to face the bosses and win.

The situation for clerical-technical workers at SF State is a case study of a union gone rotten from the centralization of knowledge and power. The power and the knowledge in CSEA Chapter 305 is completely monopolized by the union's executive committee. The "mushroom membership" has declined to well below the legal level to win a certification election, and given the nature and composition of the SFSU staff, this cannot be dismissed as anti-union feelings or simply laziness and selfishness (as CSU Division Director Brian Young would have it). The abysmal state of Chapter 305 can only be blamed on the greed (for power) and selfishness (regarding information) of the chapter leadership.

The experience of CSEA member the editor of this newsletter is a clear case in point. Her emphasis on rank and file unionism and union democracy brought her into immediate conflict with the executive committee, who recognized her talent and energy and quickly appointed her to the executive committee to control her. Her call for monthly general

membership meetings met with stubborn resistance ("The members won't come" which translates into: They will come and they will hold us accountable). The general meetings she was successful in organizing were sabotaged by the leadership of the executive committee, who insisted on limiting questions and controlling the agenda. The Rank and File newsletter was dominated by the executive committee, and was used as a platform from which to announce their dictates and embellish their minor successes. When she attempted to encourage a broad discussion of union policy regarding negotiations, she was verbally attacked and frozen out of the executive committee's information loop. Her resignation from the committee in February was a mere formality. The behavior of the committee had effectively expelled her.

So what is to be done? The idea of decertifying CSEA (and replacing it with an independent formation under the firm control of the membership) was examined. But decertifying a union is an unpleasant and risky business in the best of times. In a period of crisis it can be disastrous. A vacuum is created during the period between tossing out the discredited union and organizing a new formation. In a crisis such as the one facing SFSU workers, this vacuum could allow university management to conduct a bloody campaign of lay-offs and wage cuts. Staff workers, off-balance and still smarting from the decertification struggle, would be forced to reorganize immediately at the point of an economic gun. Decertifying CSEA does not appear to be an attractive option at this time.

A better idea, and one which would immediately empower SF State clerical-technical workers, would be the creation of a rank and file organization within Chapter 305, one which would completely ice out the

executive committee and put the power of the union into the hands of the people who pay the dues.

Such a move would be vigorously opposed by both the executive committee and the university management. But the question is not what the executive committee or the university management likes or doesn't like, it is a question of power. The executive committee has power now because they claim to speak for the membership. University management deals with the executive committee because they recognize the power of the membership as the people who do the work of the university. The creation of a rank and file assembly would shatter the executive committee's illusion that they speak for the membership, and in so doing force the university management to choose between a hollow executive committee and the rank and file assembly. They would be commanded by necessity to deal with the source of workers power, since that is what they most fear. The rank and file would put forth its own democratically elected bargaining delegates, who would be answerable to no one but the membership.

From:
The SFSU Rank & File Newsletter



A Practical Approach to Fighting Racism

How do we address the issue of racism? Racial divisions within capitalist society have reproduced themselves in the various social-revolutionary tendencies that have developed in the United States, creating segregated, isolated groupings with no real reach or power. Lacking mass-based organizations capable of confronting the capitalist's power, all of these tendencies come off as so much fluff. Whether they are small Leninist political parties or small Anarchist affinity groups and associations, they cannot be effective unless they are capable of mobilizing at least a sizeable organized minority of the population in sustained struggle. Lacking this ability, such groups will always be flashes in the pan, incapable of significant victories, either around the issue of racism or any other for that matter.

Racism is created by a multiplicity of factors, some economic (it serves our rulers to keep us fighting each other), some psychological (it's easier to fear and/or hate someone that is "different" than it is to take the time to examine the nature of those "differences"), and some sociological (it is easier to apply blame downward than it is to apply blame upward, toward those who own or dominate every aspect of society). It is not a simple issue subject to simplistic solutions. Even merely approaching the issue is difficult, since racialist thinking inhabits both the dominate

and subordinate racial groups. Overtures from white political groups are met with understandable distrust by non-white groups, particularly if the purpose of the overtures seems to be merely "selling" a line of ideas. In a country of almost universal political naivete such as the United States, where voting and "studying the issues" (within a carefully restricted framework) is viewed as the primary political activity, anyone, under any circumstances, promoting a different agenda is going to be viewed with distrust (or disdain).

A vehicle and forum for uniting different racial groups toward a common purpose on a sustained basis is needed. Only in such a forum can the level of trust be established to confront the real issues of racism head-on, as they arise, as they most surely will. Important issues such as racism can only be effectively addressed when people have established contact as people first. Sociology expands from the individual, to the small group, to the larger group, and then finally to society at large. Of course establishing a personal relationship with a person from another racial group does not eliminate racialist thinking. "Some of my best friends are...." However, working on projects of common interests and desires creates a broader comradeship that, if done within the context of a social revolutionary endeavor, can create a microcosm of a future, non-racist (and

non-racialist) society.

Of the three contributing aspects of racism (economics, psychology and sociology), economics seems the best suited avenue of approach in creating the kind of vehicle which will provide a forum to establish the kind of personal relationships necessary for real dialogue. Pro-capitalist, accommodationist economic organizations (business unions/union businesses) have proven unsuitable as such vehicles. Although they have brought varying groups together, and have established a minor track record in addressing racism, the vast majority are in fact the oppressive State in microcosm, with jumped-up presidents and representatives at least as useless as the ones who inhabit government. Only non-hierarchical, direct democracy-based (syndicalist) unions could provide an adequate forum for the kind of head-on dialogue we are advocating. Only such organizations would be capable of attacking and defeating the economic and governmental sources which support racism.

Of all the aspects of racism, the internalized psychological aspects are the most difficult. As rational beings, we are capable of rationalizing almost anything. Unfortunately, our present social chaos ("capitalist democracy") provides an almost unlimited resource of justifications for racist and racialist perceptions. Objective, critical thinking is a rare thing. Subjective, emotional responses are not only

encouraged but cultivated, by both the left and the right (it's easier to move the "masses" if the "masses" are moving with their brains turned off). Both the Left and the Right are endeavoring to spur the "masses" into creating the kind of vacuum they each need to establish power (as taught by both Lenin and Hitler). The Right is having a hell of a lot more success at present. Anarchists and libertarian socialists require that people (at least a sizable minority of the working class) develop an objective, critical realization of their condition and their potential power. This is harder, but we believe it will create a revolution worthy of the effort. We cannot achieve liberation unless we liberate ourselves from the stinking baggage of racism. We cannot view race in the terms that most Leftists do, as in viewing people in terms of their relative value as "representatives of oppressed minorities", to be recruited in means that resemble capture far more than respectful, equalitarian welcome. We must address racism in realistic terms, and not in dismissive, fanciful ideals ("after the revolution, racism won't exist, nor sexism, nor homophobia...."). Indeed, unless racism is dealt a death-blow in the initial stages of the revolution (now), it will haunt us like Hamlet's dad, or worse. Platitudes and homilies will not do. The feelings are too ingrained and the justifications are too realistic. We all know we are basically equal. We are all born babies, but we are born into a world of inequality and exploitation, which is rapidly moving toward barbarism (if it's not there already). A plethora of racist stereotypes have been encoded in our thinking (unless we have had the benefit of nurturing in an intentional community) and these must be confronted. How much better it would be if we confronted these stereotypical feelings with people whose support and comradeship we

must count on. Revolutionary economic organizations seem to be the best vehicle for this kind of interaction.

Mike Kolhoff

UC Clerical Workers Launch Independent Union

University of California clerical employees have formed a new, independent union--The Coalition of University Employees (CUE)--in response to UC management's attacks on working conditions and the failure of their former union, AFSCME, to effectively combat these attacks. CUE is organizing among the UC systems 19,000 clerical workers employed on 9 campuses between San Diego and San Francisco, the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and the Office of the President in Oakland.

" Things are getting worse daily at UC for those of us who work here," said Elinor Levine, newly elected president of CUE. Levine cited recent attacks on affirmative action and management plans to replace salary increases with "prizes" and "incentive awards," subcontract union jobs and

lay off employees. "We have fought for UC workers for years under the AFSCME banner, but organizing UC clerical workers has not been a priority for them. We can't afford such lack of support any more."

Like most of CUE's other initial members Levine is a former AFSCME member who worked for years within that union before joining with other workers to form CUE. She was president of UC Berkeley's AFSCME clerical local until September 28, 1995, when that local voted overwhelmingly to leave AFSCME and chart an independent course.

At the time of the vote UC membership in the AFSCME clerical union had fallen to approximately 5% of the 19,000 potential members.

Meet CUE's provisional executive committee, from several Northern & Southern California campuses



The French Lesson

A conservative government comes to power. They declare that it's time the national economy was more hospitable to business, so they move toward austerity (perhaps the French government needed the money to set off more nuclear weapons in the Pacific). Health care benefits and pensions for senior citizens are slated for cuts. Public service workers are the first to feel the bite.

Sound familiar? It's happening in this country, as well as France. But something happens in one place that is different.

What's different is that public service workers and their allies in France take to the streets. 150,000 demonstrate in Paris, another 100,000 demonstrate in Marseilles. They strike and bring the cities to a virtual halt.

So why not here? Partly because the organized labor movement in the U.S. has let itself become too beholden to politicians, to used to begging instead of demanding. Partly because the sense of militancy which the French workers are showing today has been overwhelmed by the self-serving posturing of our so-called leaders, whose big salaries and bigger ambitions don't allow for actions like those being taken in France. Partly because the French workers have a real sense of the history of their class and the struggles it has waged, while many of us American workers are largely unaware of our own rich history. Partly

because we have become too afraid of the laws and the rules of behavior set by the bosses to take matters into their own hands.

So how can we, as American workers, begin to change all that? The French labor movement has many of the same problems of bureaucracy and timidity as the American movement, but the workers there have shown a willingness to go beyond the constraints imposed by the bosses, the government and the union "leaders". We need to do the same.

We need to rebuild our labor movement from the bottom up, not just elect new leaders who are a little younger and a little more energetic than the old ones, such as has happened recently. We need to seek new forms of organization, based on direct democracy and collective decision-making. We need to develop bolder and more innovative forms of fighting back, beyond the 'polite' ways that haven't gotten us what we want. Further, we need a vision of a society in which power, profit and privilege will be relics for the museums.

We of Workers Solidarity Alliance are seeking to build such a movement. We call ourselves anarchist unionists, and we are part of an international federation of such groups called the International Workers Association. As you read this our affiliated organization in France,

the National Confederation of Labor, or CNT-F, is part of the fight against the right-wing attacks on the working class that is being waged in the workplaces and on the streets. We aim to do the same here.

From a leaflet produced by the New York/New Jersey Area Group of WSA-IWA



Pacifica Radio Tries to Bust Union

In a complete betrayal of its long-time commitment to progressive politics and workers rights, the management of Pacifica Radio's New York affiliate (WBAI 99.5 FM) has made demands of the WBAI union which are designed to destroy the union by removing about 90% of the members from the bargaining unit. WBAI management is also demanding financial givebacks.

In the current round of contract bargaining, management has demanded that the station's unpaid staff, who have been part of the union since it was organized in 1987, be removed from the bargaining unit and denied protection by the union. Unpaid staff have always been the largest category of workers at WBAI and they represent the vast majority of on-air announcers and producers.

Management's proposals also include plans to designate some paid staff workers as vulnerable to discharge without cause, even though the concept of "employment at-will" has been denounced on WBAI's programs for decades.

Also included in management's demands is a "No Strike" clause, which would prohibit even informational picketing at what was formerly called "Free Speech Radio, WBAI-New York."

At a meeting in April, WBAI managers admitted that their demands were made under orders from Pat Scott, executive director of the Pacifica Foundation, a California-based non-profit that owns the broadcast license of WBAI.

The Pacifica Foundation has also been firing workers, both paid and unpaid, at station KPFA in Los Angeles

and KPFA in Berkeley, specifically targeting those involved in the union.

WBAI workers are part of amalgamated local 404 of the United Electrical Workers (UE). WBAI management's other demands include virtual elimination of the grievance procedure, institution of a new class of "temporary workers" that would be excluded from the bargaining unit, and requiring workers to pay monthly medical premiums (they currently have full employer-paid medical insurance).

Workers have set up a "Save WBAI Hotline" at 212-465-7562. They call on all workers to help them fight the union busters at WBAI.



City police and county sheriff's deputies fire pepper gas at anti-fascist demonstrators in Lansing, Michigan

International News

Ex-Soviet Union

On August 5, 1995, the founding congress of the Confederation of Revolutionary Anarcho-Syndicalists, friends of the IWA (CRAS) took place in Moscow. The CRAS is social revolutionary working people's organization in the ex-Soviet Union.

Delegates with mandates of the anarcho-syndicalist and syndicalist union's initiatives from four cities of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine (Moscow, Gomel, Kiev and Minsk) participated. Organizations from two cities (Bayakalsk, Nikolayev) could not send delegates because of the lack of funds, but these groups gave their imperative mandates to the CRAS-Moscow. Anarcho-Syndicalists from Western Ukraine and two other cities joined the CRAS before the congress, but their delegates did not arrive for several reasons. The East-Ukrainian Revolutionary Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists rejected the opinion that creation of an IWA Section was well-timed.

Delegates of the congress adopted unanimously the resolution about the foundation of the confederation and discussed, then adopted, the organizational principles of CRAS. The principles will be come valid one month after local groups are informed. The confederation struggles for the creation of a libertarian communist (anarchist) society by means of revolutionary syndicalism. The primary task of the CRAS is the building of large revolutionary and independent working class unions, able to struggle for the daily interests of working people and for social revolution. The CRAS has a goal to transform itself into a confederation of such unions.

The CRAS follows the aims, programmatical and organizational

principles of the anarcho-syndicalist international, the International Workers Association. The confederation rejects all types of state, party, capitalist and "state socialist" ideology and tactics. It uses only methods of self-organization and direct action.

The resolutions on the situation in eastern Europe and Northern Asia and the tasks of the CRAS, on resistance to militarism and to the fascist danger, and on relations with other libertarian groups.



REMEMBER:
**WE'RE
STILL
HERE**
**SUPPORT
ANARCHIST
& CLASS WAR
PRISONERS**

Poland

(OGB News Service) From the Polish Anarchist Federation:

Marek Milewski was arrested on February 17, 1996 in Karkow during a demonstration whose aim was to disclose materials compromising figures in the city's political and financial elite. It turned out that president Lasota and Municipal Authorities had been cheating people out of money for more than a year, raising twenty times the cost for erecting a tombstone and funerals. This was deemed the previous April as a monopoly by the Anti-monopolistic Bureau. In spite of being ordered to lower the prices being

charged, the city's authorities did nothing and never changed the prices. In this way some thousands of Karkow families were robbed of their money.

For several years the city of Krakow's Foundation for Promoting Culture has been failing to pay rent for a very commercial property they had been renting (the Main Square they use as their Christmas market). Now their debt amounts to a billion of old zlotys. On top of that, the Foundation applied for financial assistance from the City Council to help them run their jewelry stand in Nurnberg, Germany. All funds earned there are tax exempt and find their way into private pockets. The Control Section of city's Cultural department found nothing wrong with it. And at the same time "courageous" functionaries of the Municipal Guard ruthlessly chase away little peddlers displaying their sugar or wool, if only they can find a single formal detail lacking--that's the image of democratic equality in the legal system!

Sobieslaw Zasad, one of the biggest Polish businessmen fired a group of workers because they organized a trade union in his enterprise. He thus violated basic laws of the workers and the Bill on Trade Unions.

The above-mentioned "trustworthy citizens" were all invited to a Charity Ball in the City Council building. On this occasion the Anarchist Federation staged a manifestation against the hypocrisy of these false benefactors. This manifestation was brutally attacked and dispersed by the police.

Marek Milewski, one of the manifestants, was accused of assaulting a policeman. He is

threatened with five years imprisonment. Marek, an anarchist and a student of archeology has been put in jail at Montelupich Street and is awaiting his trial. His imprisonment is the revenge of the city authorities for our disclosing their corruption. Why does the law work one way for regular citizens and another way for those in high positions or with full wallets? Someone wise once said: "The law is a whore serving the rich and those making politics."

We demand justice which is the same for all. Don't be indifferent! It is Marek today and you tomorrow.

Letters of protest can be sent to:
Prokuratura rejonowa Krakow-Sraolmiescie
ul. Mosisznicza 2
Krakow, POLAND

Letters of support can be sent to:
A-Info/ABC
ul. Gontyna 1/2
30-203 Krakow, POLAND

Free Arthur Ates:

Arthur Ates is an 18 year old member of the Polish Anarchist Federation arrested at a February anti-fascist rally in Pozan, Poland. He has been accused of assault. The primary state's witness against him is nazi skinhead, although on the witness stand he has denied that he is nazi. Arthur's family is very poor and is unable to pay for a defense. The Polish ABC is collecting funds to pay for legal costs in this case. Prison officials have blocked visits to Arthur by his lawyer and his parents. Friends who saw him at his march 20th court date said that he looked very bad. Any help you can send should be directed to the A-Info/ABC address listed above.

rare solitary position and are in fact forced to foster a completely new historic tradition. This is because the last independent, libertarian ultra-left and anarchist groups disappeared 72 years ago. The anarchist movement in

the territory of the Czech Republic was very strong before WWI, but after the war it dissolved or joined the newly formed Communist party. We can trace the last issues of anarchist magazines being printed and distributed in 1924. Then there was a gap consisting of the bourgeois 1st republic (1918-38), nazi occupation (1939-45), socialist Lind Republic (1945-48) and bolshevik dictatorship after the communist coup d'etat in 1948 (ended in 1989). What important is that in the period 1924 to 1989 there are absolutely no signs of any anarchist activity at all. No magazines, no groups, not even any clandestine organizations. Because of the unique character of the Czechoslovakian bolshevik regime, there was also no genuine leftist or ultra-leftist opposition at all. The Czechoslovak



dictatorship was called "a goulash regime"- the government was targeting it's repression against openly revolting citizens only, and outside of small and incoherent dissent there was a "shadow" or "gray" zone of people who were left alone in their small consumerist private worlds, with wide possibilities to enrich themselves in the black market economy (estimated percentage of "black" economy in late 1980s to the gross national product was 10-15%!!!). Ordinary people were enslaved in relative comfort in a non-

conflict way. The November "revolution" was initiated not by a desire for liberty and civil rights, but by a lust for consumer goods and lifestyle, as could be seen in our closest neighbor, West Germany.

It means that although the political attitude of "Charter 77" and generally of the whole movement of dissent was presented a moralist one, real social discontent, which caused the explosion of civil disobedience in November 1989, was based on the simple fact that "real socialist" supermarkets were unable to fulfill the growing demands of the "real socialist" middle class. It means there was obviously no chance for anarchist or ultra-left argumentation, which is based also on rejection of the western system. The revolution started with slogans like "Truth and

Love must win over Lies and Hate"... (oh, my god)...but soon they were replaced by calls for "prosperity", "return to Europe" and "market economy" etc.

In these conditions the establishment of the C.A.S.-Czechoslovak Anarchist Union- in summer 1989 must be seen as a miracle. I must say that I don't belong to the oldest generation. I joined the movement in the spring of 1991 (when it was already in decline), so I don't have much information about this period. But C.A.S. never

succeeded in forming a tradition or organization, it was rather a cluster of individuals and several small groups-anarchopacifists, anarcho-syndicalists and a-individualists. It is understandable that by the spring of 1991 C.A.S. wasn't functioning as an organized structure at all. The only remaining group that bears the name CAS is the small team assembled around the magazine A-KONTRA.

After the dissolution of CAS, its successor was the AF, Anarchist Federation, which lasted only two years. It had several autonomous groups and one coordinating group in Prague. In my opinion AF was never successful in establishing a functioning federation, because its inner structure was too chaotic. AF also refused any cooperation with any "leftist" movement or even individuals and tried to create "pure" anarchism. But in fact their program was a manifestation of the autonomous, not the anarchist, movement. AF organized three May 1st demonstrations (92,93,94) and had as its main project the squat Ladronka, which played a key role in transforming AF into an autonomist movement. In 1994 nearly all AF groups vanished, except in Prague and BMO. In 1995 there was no sign of AF activity at all. It had been replaced by the new autonomist movement.

The Czech Anarchist Federation (CAF) is not a real federation consisting of groups of the same kind. But there are some basic views and projects we've decided to run. Basically CAF consists of anarcho-communists, revolutionary anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists. We created CAF because we lacked a kind of anarchist coordinating structure. Many of us see the Spanish FAI as an example and inspiration. The structure of the CAF is decentralized. CAF consists of seven regions, composed of autonomous groups, cells and individuals. We

have no common coordinating group, except referendum and congress. Each region is fully self-managed by its members and has full autonomy within the federation. It seems to be heavy going, but we hold regional meetings each month and our experience with direct democracy has so far been positive.

Peter Wohlmuth, C.A.F.



Serbia
OVER THE WALLS OF NATIONALISM
AND WAR

Following is an article from a four page paper of the above name. It was produced and distributed throughout ex-Yugoslavia by anarchists from Serbia and Croatia.

Yugoslavia was bound to disintegrate; as any other "real-socialist" country, she was a dictatorship, a bureaucratic authoritarian regime that canceled freedoms. The so-called freedom that was intrinsic to "our" country compared to the other Eastern European countries was nothing but an illusion; again, whoever raised a voice against it, could expect a police baton.

Our abundantly praised self-management was yet another illusion; did working people have an opportunity freely to associate, to reproduce and to exchange their products benefiting everyone? No, they did not.

On the other hand we should not

have illusions now about the Western capitalist chimera, which is no better; the "free" market is just another apparition ruled by the interests of the rich and powerful. Its foundations are savage competition and exploitation of human by human and of nature by human. It brings wealth and privileges to a minority, and repression, poverty and famine to the majority.

Due to the collapse of Yugoslavia a lot of state bureaucrats were left without their dole. Those who always wanted power masterminded the way to realize their ugly goals: new nationalist countries were born out of the will for power among the old and the new power-hungry nomenclature [administrative officials under Communism]. The clash of their overlaying appetites caused the war. They are the ones who painted the picture of an enemy aggressor (Albanian, Serbian, Slovenian, Croatian, Muslim, ...) using the mass-media. Just the ideological facade changed; now it was nationalism, no more socialism. The enormous need for being in power at any cost behind the facade did not change at all.

The same responsibility bear international business and political structures too. They actually profit from continuation of this war; multinational corporations would get more things to rebuild, the U.N. will confirm its role as a world policeman of the New World Order, manufacturers and dealers of arms will make more profits quietly and "peacefully" supplying warring ethnocracies, various state run humanitarian organizations hiding in the guise of humanitarian aid take their government's side in the conflict. All of them are just speculators that build their financial, political, denominational and military power on violence and exploitation.

Therefore, we should remove the rag they put over our eyes: our enemy is not a Serb, a Croat or a

Muslim. The aggressors and occupiers are states, all states, and masters, political leaders, the military and clerics. The victims are all exploited, hard working people, unemployed, retired, students - regardless of what nationality they belong to. Real solidarity shows through direct action against the causes of war. Anything else is manipulation, the inclination to war profiteering and an attempt to bring about an "armed peace" which exposes itself best in the present nationalist madness.

Up to date the powerful of all colors used us for their dirty games, giving to us war, death, violence, unemployment, destitution and despair in exchange for that. Enough! Rebel!

WE WANT TO ABOLISH ALL ARMIES, TO OPPOSE ALL WHO ARE IN POWER, TO DISABLE THOSE WHO USE WAR TO GAIN AND MAINTAIN THEIR POWER.

We wish to regain control over our lives to create a society without a state, without borders, without exploitation, a society based on free association between free individuals so each one of us may fulfill his/her needs and not lose empathy for the needs of others.

LET US NOT BE AT REST WITH THOSE WHO WISH WAR!

The purpose of this announcement:

This little newsletter, that gathers free-spirited people in Croatia and Serbia, signifies the beginning of co-operation between geographically distant friends, which are at the same time close in their thoughts, feelings and ideas. From this moment on starts our common cause to disseminate information in struggle for a classless and authority-less society.

Each article published here

expresses individual opinion. All articles are published in the language in which they were written, and we are sure that they should be easily read by a lot of people living in the territories of former Yugoslavia.

Addresses: ZAP (Zagreb Anarchist Organization) c/o ARK, Tkalciceva 38, 41000 Zagreb, Croatia

CRNI GAVRAN (Black Raven) c/o Dragon Marcovic, Filipa Visnjica 10, 11420 Smed Palanka, Serbia-Yugoslavia

TORPEDO c/o Milan Djuric, M. Velikog 12/10, 11300 Smederevo, Serbia-Yugoslavia

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Nigeria

INTERVIEW WITH NIGERIA'S ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST AWARENESS LEAGUE

Conducted mid-'94 by Germany's Free Workers Union

(Edited only for American English clarity by Neither East Nor West-NYC)

Do you think there is a real danger of a civil war in Nigeria? Or is there a real chance for free elections which have been promised several times?

The way things are going, there is a real risk of civil war. Many prominent Nigerians have warned about this. So have many foreign commentators who have recently visited the country for a first-hand assessment, such as American civil rights leader Jesse Jackson. For the record, Nigeria fought a civil war from 1967 to 1970, when the eastern part of the country declared the Republic of Biafra and seceded. All the elements that were present in that crisis are equally present in the current imbroglio.

A. There were disputed federal elections in 1964; and canceled presidential elections in 1993.

B. There was trial and imprisonment of one of the opposition leaders on treason charges in the 1960s; today we have the ongoing treason trail and incarceration of [opposition leader] Chief Moshood Abiola. The chances of conviction are high.

C. There was the military coup in 1966. Now, the chances of a military coup are high in the country.

D. The east seceded from the federal government in 1967; today the west and a host of ethnic nationalities in the east have openly called for a confederation, with the establishment of regional armies, which could be a prelude to another secession bid.

Overall, the civil war scenario is not inevitable. The lessons of 1967-70 point to the futility of war as a means of resolving any conflict. Internal and external pressures to force the military to hand over power within the next six months can avert the looming catastrophe.

As for elections, the experience of [ousted dictator General Ibrahim Babangida] shows that the military cannot be trusted. In the event of any future election, the military will want to hand over power to their candidate, or nothing. If they could annul the June 12 elections [believed to have been won by Abiola], which, by their own admission was the freest the

country has had, wherein lies the guarantee that they would allow free elections in the future?

Is the Awareness League involved in the strikes now shaking Nigeria? If yes, what are the activities of the Awareness League? If not, why aren't you involved?

Yes, we are involved in the strikes. Our members are principally university and polytechnic lecturers, journalists, students, civil service employees, and other activists of leftist persuasion. The universities are currently on strike nationwide, and our members are involved. Civil servants in the Enugu state are presently on strike, and Awareness League activists are a part of it. Additionally, many independent newspaper houses are presently shut, and their premises forcibly occupied by soldiers and policemen. Again, our members are affected.

What is the position of the Awareness League towards the election?

The June 12, 1993 presidential elections pitted the Social Democratic Party candidate, Moshood Abiola, against Bashir Tofa, the candidate of the right-wing National Republican Convention. The latter was clearly the candidate of the military. All progressive groups, trade unions, pro-democracy groups and left organizations, including the Awareness League, rallied around the SDP candidate. This action was, in the main, a vote against military rule. The Awareness League, like many other left groups, was of the view that the installation of a left of centre government was a minimum condition for the propagation and pursuit of anarcho-syndicalist struggle and ideals.

Is there cooperation with other groups in Nigeria and other African states?

The Awareness League collaborates with the human rights group Campaign for Democracy, but

we are not members of the group. There is an emerging body in Nigeria known as the Left Coalition, to which the Awareness League belongs. Our next congress will, hopefully, ratify this step. We have been trying without success to establish links with other left groups and preferably anarchist groups in other African countries, especially South Africa.

What are the main fields of activity of the Awareness League? In which professions and social groups are members of the Awareness League from?

Our activities are mainly in the area of worker education, ideological re-orientation, creation of the necessary environment for political consciousness, propaganda and mobilization. Our members are mainly university workers and teachers, journalists, civil servants and students.

Are there many women in the Awareness League, and what are their main political activities and interests?

Unfortunately, there are not many women members in the Awareness League. This has to do with the structure of African society, in which women hardly take part in political activities. This is made worse by the fact that not as many women as men are educated. Most women, therefore, are not in a position to appreciate the program of anarcho-syndicalism. All that will be a thing of the past with sustained political education and enlightenment over a period of time.

What can people in other countries do to support the fight of the Awareness League in Nigeria?

Fist and foremost, the Awareness League seeks fraternal international solidarity. We also seek material and financial support to be able to build a strong anarchist group in Nigeria by creating the necessary enlightenment and ideological consciousness for the mobilization of workers, leftists and other activists. *Our immediate needs*

include a printing machine, photocopying machine, electric typewriter, anarchist literature, books and other materials. These materials will enable us to carry out our educational and propaganda activities throughout the country, and facilitate our communication with other groups around the world.

- *By our correspondent in Nigeria.*

Awareness League, POB 1920, Enugu State, Nigeria

[Donations should be sent in cash or unsigned blank American Express Travelers checks.]

Zaire

The situation for unionists in the nation of Zaire has not improved since the legalization of alternative union structures in 1991. The Organization Syndicale des Travailleurs (OST) of Zaire had existed as a clandestine organization for 30 years prior to legalization. Now after being officially recognized, OST is under the most severe attacks from the Mobutu regime.

Workers in Zaire suffer horrible conditions, with the average wages being \$3 a month. Many workers are forced to eat only once every 48 hours in order to stretch the amount of food they can buy on such low wages. Despite the legalization workers organizations, strikes are still illegal, and are met with direct violent force from the police and army. Picket lines are not tolerated, and when police and the soldiers shoot, they shoot to kill. When the state's forces attack a demonstration or strike attempt, those injured cannot be taken to local hospitals, since the soldiers have been to "finish the job" when they find them there.

In March 1996 we spoke with OST international representative Serge Makundi while he was in the office Hospital Workers Local 1199 in New York.

I&A: How large is the OST and where

around 35,000 members. Most members of OST are employed in the public sector, such as health care, the postal service and education, but we have unions in mining, transport, communications and electrical workers as well.

I&A: What is the situation your activists face in Zaire?

Serge: It is very bad. There are now 45 OST unionists, organizers and stewards, who are either missing or have been found dead. My brother, a shop steward in the postal service, disappeared before I left. I was informed only recently that his body had been discovered dumped in the street. He had been tortured to death. They had infected him with tuberculosis, it was horrible. It is a life or death struggle to be a union activist in Zaire.

I&A: What self-defense measures have you taken?

Serge: We have armed forces in the jungle, and in conjunction with the Workers and Peasant's Party we control approximately 1/4 of the countryside. If things get bad for members, they can find safety there. Zaire is still a stronghold of mercenaries. They are everywhere, and have been there since the 1960s. But the world turns a blind eye to Zaire. Mobutu rules with an iron fist, but no one knows. At least Nigeria makes the newscasts. Zaire is never mentioned.

OST needs money to buy medical supplies and conduct the legal defense of activists accused on trumped-up charges. Donations can be sent to: The Fund for Zaire Trade Unionists, PO Box 2919, Grand Central Stn. New York, NY 10017.

Chile

Chilean Anarchist-Unionists Aid Miners

As the privatization steamroller continues to move through Chile, efforts are being made to continue to "rationalize" the state coal mining sector. In the mining towns of Lota and Coronel the miners refused to go along with the loss of 97 jobs, which the miners view as a possible indication that the mines will be closed in the future. From the start of the fight Solidaridad de Obreros-AIT de Concepcion (Workers Solidarity-IWA of Concepcion) and Sindicatos Oficinas Varios-Santiago (Mixed Unions of Santiago) were there to aid the miners. Rather than allowing the terminations to take place without resistance, the miners occupied the company offices, began a hunger strike and started a community organizing campaign.

The campaign to save the miners jobs continues and many marches, open town meetings and solidarity activities have taken place throughout Chile.

Within this conflict the pro-IWA unions have done all possible to raise material aid for the miners and build support organizations outside the mining towns; as well as help the workers gain self-confidence and to depend more on working class self-organization and solidarity than on political parties or the Trade Union Central (CUT).

Letters of support and aid is being organized through the SO-AIT Concepcion and can be sent by FAX to (56-41) 247860 ATTN: Eduardo Torres -or- to the SOV-AIT FAX at (56-2) 7413175.

Financial contribution should be sent to :

Savings Acct. # 349605851161 of Banco del Estado, account holder Evelyn Moreno T.

Philippines

The WSA has recently established contact with class struggle anarchists in the Philippines. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first ever contact in the post-WW2 era with Philippine anarchists.

The comrades recently wrote us and gave us a picture of the Philippine anarchist movement. According to their letter, there are "less than 200 persons who [are] into anarchism, non-hierarchical class struggle and anarcho-syndicalism in the metro Manila area." It appears that they are mainly young, with a majority being college students.

Their efforts seem, for the moment, to be educational in nature. They are seeking information, advice and support from IWA sections. Anarchist Unionist and anarchist literature is requested and sorely needed. A few dollars would also help.

Correspondence and literature can be sent to:

Ban Cabuguang
#07 Emerald St.
De-va Village, Tambak
1636 Tagig, Metro Manila
Philippines



International Campaign to Aid the Nigerian Awareness League

Despite the continuing efforts by the Nigerian military dictatorship to silence all opposition, the Awareness League continues to carry out its activities. The Awareness League aims to create a mass movement capable of fighting for workers and peasant self-management and libertarian socialism.

The AL must not only endure the hardships of the effects of governmental repression, they must also deal with the effects of unemployment and poverty caused by the policies of austerity. An austerity which has been imposed on the Nigerian people by the military dictatorship, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

SOLIDARITY NEEDED FOR FIRED UNION ORGANIZER

WSA-IWA calls on all worker militants to support the boycott against Borders Books for their retaliatory firing of union organizer Miriam Fried. Phone calls to Borders general headquarters (800-644-7733), and/or general manager Dave Stewart (215-568-7400) demanding the reinstatement of Miriam Fried are encouraged. Pickets of Borders stores in your area would also be helpful.

Background:

Miriam Fried was a member of the organizing committee and an outspoken union supporter during a failed IWW organizing drive at Borders. The drive was defeated by a vote of 25 to 20.

Several Borders workers at the Philadelphia store where the drive took place made contact with the

In order to help them carry out their activities, the WSA-IWA, in cooperation with the Awareness League, has initiated an international campaign to raise a minimum of \$2,000 USD to help the AL purchase a computer and other equipment. The AL plans "to use the computer for typesetting and desk-top publishing to facilitate the production of [their] newsletter, journals, posters, handbills [and other] materials for political education and enlightenment." The AL believes that such aid would help them immeasurably.

The WSA-IWA issues this appeal in the hopes that all of you will come to the aid of the Awareness League. Your material support is critical. Help

United Food and Commerical Workers (UFCW) to continue the fight for a union. The UFCW is involved in organizing several other Borders stores.

In the midst of this, Miriam Fried questioned a management policy involving the cashing of checks. The policy involved a relatively minor matter. When, after a meeting with general manager Dave Stewart, she still had questions about the policy, she was fired on the spot. Prior to this her performance reviews had all been perfect. Her firing was clearly an attempt by management to stop organizing activity once and for all.

Please send copies of all correspondence to: Wooden Shoe Books, 112 S. 20th St., Philadelphia, PA 19103. Write to this address also for copies of flyers and to purchase t-shirts (\$9, specify size L or XL).

aid the struggle for freedom, workers and peasants self-management and libertarian socialism in Nigeria and throughout Africa.

During the course of this campaign periodic progress reports will be issued. Please send your donations to:

Workers Solidarity Alliance-IWA
339 Lafayette Street, Rm. 202
New York, New York, 10012 USA

UC Grad Employees Launch Rolling Strikes

Beginning November 22, members of the graduate employee unions in the University of California system decided to escalate their struggle to win collective bargaining rights.

Teaching assistants at UCLA, UC-San Diego, and UC-Berkeley went on strike in rolling actions across the UC system. They were joined by readers and tutors at San Diego and UCLA. This occurred after the administration refused to implement a Public Employee Relations Board judge's order to acknowledge the collective bargaining rights of teaching assistants. The order includes readers and tutors at UCLA and UC-San Diego. Readers and tutors at UC-Berkeley already have collective bargaining.

Approximately 2400 academic student employees withheld their labor at the three campuses, and well over 1200 strikers turned out to walk the picket lines.

Letters of support and solidarity can be sent to the UC-Berkeley AGSE local at:

AGSE/UAW Local 2165
2372 Ellsworth
Berkeley, CA 94704 USA
email: agse@netcom.com

Cuban Anarchism: A History

1850 to 1870 - Associations of tobacco workers, typesetters and printers, day laborers and artisans organized. First mutualist society organized in 1857. Saturnino Martinez founds *La Aurora* (Proudhonist weekly) in 1865.

1870 to 1890 - Anarchists took an active part in the Ten Years War (1868-1878) against Spanish rule. Enrique Roig de San Martin founds Bakuninist weekly *El Productor* in 1885. With its assistance, The Workers' Alliance was founded in 1887 and quickly began to organize workers in Cuba and Southern Florida. In 1889 the Alliance called a successful general strike in Key West.

1890 to 1910 - The Workers' Alliance celebrated Mayday in 1890 with a demonstration and memorial to the murdered Chicago Anarchists. In 1892, Cuban Anarchists celebrated their first regional congress, where they urged working class backing for Jose Marti's independence movement. The colonial authorities closed the congress and jailed or deported most participants. Marti's uprising broke out in 1895, only to be terminated with the U.S. intervention during the Spanish-American War of 1898. In 1899, Anarchists initiated a bricklayers strike with the backing of the weekly *Tierra!* The strike was brutally suppressed. In the following years, strikes occurred among tobacco workers, bakers, bricklayers, and carpenters. During this period, Anarchism was the dominant influence in the Cuban labor movement.

1910 to 1920 - In 1915 the Campesino Federation of the providence de las Villas was founded under Anarchist influence. Subsequently, a wave of organizing and strikes, which were viciously suppressed, took place in the sugar industry. Several more Anarchist papers appeared in this period, including *La Batalla*, *Nuevos Rumbos*, and *Via Libre*. Ideological orientation began to move in the direction of Anarcho-Syndicalism, through the influence of the Spanish Confederation Nacional del Trabajo.

1920 to 1930 - In 1922, Alfredo Lopez, a member of the Typographers Union, organized the anarcho-syndicalist Workers' Union of Havana. In 1924 the Federation Of Cuban Anarchist Groups, a Cuban version of the FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation), was founded and became active in promoting strikes and protests. In 1925, The National Confederation Of Cuban Workers (CNOC) was founded following regional conferences in Havana, Cienfuegos, and Camaguey. One hundred sixty delegates representing 128 unions, brotherhoods, guilds and workers associations, comprising over 100,00 workers took part in CNOC's founding conference. They reached an agreement on "the complete and collective rejection of electoral action," as well as a unanimous desire not to bureaucratise the new organization, work towards an eight hour day and the right to strike.

The Cuban dictator Gerardo

Machado considered the attitude of the workers "not very patriotic," and unleashed a campaign of relentless persecution of the CNOC and its leading militants. This included the jailing or deportation of every Anarcho-Syndicalist he could lay his hands on, as well as the outright murder of Alfredo Lopez, general secretary of the CNOC, and other Anarchists. This persecution of Anarchists allowed the recently formed Cuban Communist Party to place itself in a powerful position within the CNOC and subsequently to make a deal with Machado.

1930 to 1940 - In August 1933, libertarian elements within the Streetcar Workers Union led a general strike which drove Machado from office. In September of that year Fulgencio Batista staged a coup d'etat. In March 1935, the Cuban Anarchists attempted to overthrow Mendieta, a Batista puppet, through another strike, but it failed because of government repression and the opposition of the Communists. In 1936 the Spanish Revolution broke out and many Cuban Anarchists went to Spain where they fought and died in the militia columns of the CNT-FAI (National Confederation of Labor/Iberian Anarchist Federation). Those remaining in Cuba formed the International Anti-Fascist Solidarity Organization which during the war years dedicated itself to collecting money and arms for the CNT-FAI, and after the fascist victory aided returning Cuban and escaping Spanish Anarchists. In 1939, following orders from Moscow, the

Communists made a pact with Batista, who in exchange for their support gave them control of a new union organization created for them, the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC). In response, the Anarchists formed a new organization called the Libertarian Association of Cuba (ALC).

1940 to 1950 - The Anarchists again turned to labor organizing. The Libertarian Youth Group was formed and was active in these efforts. Anarchists also formed pressure groups within the CTC. Batista continued his alliance with the Communists and gave them ministerial posts, money and access to the communications media. For their part, the Communists continued to support Batista and conferred upon him titles such as "The Messenger of Prosperity." In 1944, Ramon Grau San Martin was elected president, and in 1947, under U.S. pressure, he ousted the Communists from their perches in the hierarchy of the CTC. Anarchists won many posts in the elections following these sackings. They also turned to rural matters and organized campesino associations, notably in the north coast province of Camaguey and in the coffee growing regions of Oriente province where Anarchists had founded and maintained free agricultural collectives. In 1949, they attempted to form a new labor central, but failed under governmental pressure.

1950 to 1958 - In 1950 the new president, Carlos Prío Socarras, outlawed the Popular Socialist Party (Communists) and the Communists again sought an alliance with Batista. Batista took power in 1952 by means of a coup d'état. The Communists again infiltrated the bureaucracy, but were unable to regain their influence within the CTC. In 1956, Castro landed in Oriente province and won recruits

in the cities and carried out acts of violence in them. At this time, Castro's political program was purely reformist and consisted largely of a demand for a return to the liberal constitution proclaimed in 1940; in short, it was a minimalist program designed to attract the support of all elements of the democratic opposition to Batistas.

The ALC took the side of the democratic opposition and many Anarchists fought as guerrillas in the eastern and central parts of the island, while others participated in the urban struggle. Logically they had no faith in Castro, but they considered getting rid of Batistas the most important thing.

1959 to 1987 - Very shortly after assuming power, Castro purged the CTC leadership of all Anarchists as well as most all social democrats. At the end of 1959, the now "revolutionary" CTC was delivered lock, stock and barrel to the government. In 1960, the libertarian movement's periodicals, *El Libertario* and *Solidaridad Gastronómica*, were forced out of existence. A short-lived clandestine paper followed, called *Nuestra Palabra Semanal*, which was published by the newly created Movement of Union Action. The Anarchists lacked the resources to successfully struggle against Castro's dictatorship, and a great many were either jailed or forced into exile.

In 1961, the Cuban Libertarian Movement was founded in the United States. It was in contact with the remnants of the ALC within Cuba and helped raise funds to rescue endangered Anarchists still on the island. The exiled Cuban Anarchists engaged in propaganda activities and founded the paper *El Gastronómico*. They met with little success. During the 1960's Castro still enjoyed great prestige, and very few people - even among Anarchists

- were ready to believe the truth that Castro was a brutal dictator.

By the mid-1970s, there was a change in attitude among the world's anti-authoritarians; a disenchantment with Castro and his revolution had set in. But by that time the Cuban Anarchists were in disarray. In the march to exile many had sacrificed themselves; others had become frustrated and inactive; some remained tied to their land; and others rotted in jail. But not all had given up. The Cuban Libertarian Movement remained alive in Miami. In 1980 the Cuban Anarchists began publishing *Guangara Libertaria* - it was the only Spanish language Anarchist paper published in the United States. [*Guangara* stopped publishing in the early '90's.]



Living in the USA-- Some Thoughts

Throughout the pages of this publication, and in our general literature and organizing, we talk about the need for a systematic and radical change of society. We do so not to hear ourselves talk, but with the clear understanding and desire that real, meaningful change is desperately needed. Not living in a vacuum, or a dream world, we all face a society where our dreams and desires are forever being cast aside. For many, the natural human desire for a free and fulfilled life has been replaced with the necessity of fighting to survive-or forget.

For those who live in poverty, the facts listed below are terrible reminders of what you already know. For all of the rest, these facts should serve as a wake-up call for what is on the horizon if we do not, once and for all, work toward building a new society. A society where we the people are fully in control of our lives and destinies.

POVERTY:

Over 15% of all Americans live in poverty. In numbers this translates into 39.3 million human beings who are destitute. According to all statistics this is the highest level of U.S. poverty since 1962.

The poorest of the poor are children. 21.8% of all children, 15.3 million, live in poverty. In some US cities child poverty rates are higher than 35%.

INFANT MORTALITY:

Despite the well propagated myth that the USA is the wealthiest country in the world, it should be pointed out that the US ranks highest in infant mortality among the

world's 15 major industrial nations.

FOOD STAMPS:

28 million Americans receive food stamps to help them survive. According to the US Department of Agriculture, this number is an all-time high. The USDA also reports that many of the families receiving food stamps are working but not earning enough to make ends meet.

HEALTH INSURANCE:

39.7 million Americans are currently without health insurance.

RACISM AND SEXISM:

The racist and sexist nature of capitalism is also quite clear. It is estimated that 33.1% of all Black Americans are poor and 30.6% of all Hispanic Americans. 35.6% of all families headed by women are poor. The Southern states of the US continue to lead the country with the highest poverty rate of 17.1%.

FINANCIAL SQUEEZE:

The continuing downward squeeze being forced upon can also be seen by the fact that real earnings have declined since 1979 by 10.3%, and lay-offs in the industrial sector continue unabated.

TEMPORARY WORK AND WAGES:

As real earnings and full-time employment further erode, the rise in temporary work as dramatically increased. It is estimated that at least 10% of all working Americans work on a "contingent" basis. In manufacturing the number is now at around 25%. Temp wages are well below those paid to permanent

workers, and health benefits are almost non-existent.

I would argue that the above statistics should not lead us to the conclusion that all that is needed is some type of "structural" reform, or a catchy slogan like "America Needs a Raise". In both instances we would ultimately end up perpetuating the problems. The real issues are not simply to expand programs which continue a system of cyclical poverty and despair, or one that gives an illusion of wealth and empowerment (remember the much-touted idea of the "middle-class" worker?). The bottom line is that all of us are continuing to fall to the bottom (as if we were ever on the top?) and band-aid reforms will not solve the problem.

As anarchist unionists we believe that the fight is not one of ideas only. Yes, we do believe that the struggle for a brighter future begins today. Surely the end to such atrocities as infant mortality. Surely to providing pre-natal health care, achieving racial harmony and a better standard of living for all are good things. However, we believe that only when the current system is completely abolished and replaced with one that will insure real control by all of us (we call this "self-management") will the world be a better place.

Mike Harris

WHAT IS WORKERS SOLIDARITY ALLIANCE?

WSA is a nationwide organization of individuals dedicated to the task of building a revolutionary workers movement in the United States. We believe that to be effective, this movement must be based on the ideas of workers self-management and libertarian communism. It must be a movement controlled BY workers, not FOR workers. We call the process of building this movement anarcho-syndicalism.

WSA members are involved in many different activities working toward this common goal. We are involved in the fight against racism and the rise of the fascist right. We are involved in the struggle to end sexism and the suppression of women's rights. We are involved in the daily struggle in the workplace to wrest concessions and weaken the power of the capitalist class. We are involved in the fight against the destruction of our natural environment by rapacious industrialists who know no values save those measured in dollars.

THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION:

WSA is the US Section of International Workers Association (IWA). The IWA is a world-wide federation of anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary syndicalist organizations and unions. The IWA includes organizations in every continent of the globe, with new organizations being welcomed constantly.

The IWA Secretariat coordinates the communications of the association's member groups, as well as with external formations. It is the Secretariat that convenes the regular congresses at which association decisions are made.

The IWA was created in the 1920s as a libertarian alternative to the authoritarian Red Trade Union International created by the COMINTERN (USSR) to rope in all revolutionary union organizations.

MEMBERSHIP IN WSA-IWA:

WSA membership is open to all individuals who share the common goals of the organization. Individuals are encouraged to form local groups in their areas to facilitate greater and more effective activities.

Dues in WSA-IWA are based on your hourly pay rate and are assessed quarterly. Current dues are as follows:

Hourly Wage:	Quarterly Dues:
\$0-\$4.99	\$ 7.00
\$5-\$7.99	\$12.00
\$8-\$11.99	\$18.00
\$12-\$over	\$24.00

Individuals interested in joining WSA-IWA should mail their dues along with a letter requesting membership to:

WSA-IWA
339 Lafayette St #202
New York, NY 10012
Or call: (212) 979-8353

If you would like additional information on WSA-IWA contact the above address/number or any of the local/regional contacts listed below:

Northeast Region:
NY/NJ WSA Group
339 Lafayette St #202
New York, NY 10012

Midwest Region:
Lansing WSA-IWA
P.O. Box 11172
Lansing, MI 48901-1172

Southern Region:
WSA-IWA
P.O. Box 1197
San Antonio, TX 78294

Western Region:
WSA c/o Liam Flynn
3124 Shattuck Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94705

The following sites on the World-Wide-Web also have information on WSA-IWA:

<http://WWW.DORSAL.ORG/AGONY/WSA>
<http://WWW.UNCANNY.NET/WSA>

INDUSTRIAL NETWORKS:

WSA-IWA currently coordinates two industrial networks serving individuals employed in the Education Sector and the Public Sector. They may be contacted at the following addresses:

Education Workers Network-

LCC Clerical-Technical Union c/o
756 Chicago Avenue
Lansing, MI 48915
mk1299@lois.lansing.cc.mi.us

EWN c/o
POB 1197
San Antonio, TX 78294

Public Sector Network:

PSN c/o WSA-IWA
339 Lafayette St #202
New York, NY 10012
(212) 979-8353

Frequently Asked Questions

about the

Workers Solidarity Alliance



Q: You said you were anarcho- what?

A: Syndicalists. That's French for unionists. More specifically, it's the name of a trade unionist movement that started at the beginning of the century, and that fights for a new society managed and controlled by the working class.

Q: But I thought anarchism was only about creating chaos, throwing bombs and fighting with the cops?

A: There is unfortunately all kinds of weirdoes that call themselves anarchists. Some deranged loners (like the unabomber) believe in throwing bombs. Many more are pacifists and think everybody should move to the countryside and start growing biodynamical food. Still others claim true anarchism means squatting empty buildings and living from dumpsterdiving. Serious anarchism, however, has always been rooted in the working class struggle.

Q: How does WSA differ from other anarchist groups?

A: Many anarchists have utopian visions of a better world, but fail to offer concrete answers on how people would be housed, fed, clothed, etc. in a future anarchist society. WSA believes that unions of workers based on anarchist principles could redistribute such necessities. We know anarchism is not just a pipe dream, and has throughout history shown itself to work. We're also the best looking anarchist group. :-)

Q: Aren't unions just as corrupt and bureaucratic as the government?

A: When we talk about building unions, we don't mean ones like those current mainstream ones (such as the AFL-CIO) which are run by bureaucrats only out for themselves and who could care less about the average worker. Even in the rare cases where the leaders are sincere, their top-down structure leaves the members out of key decision-making and at best defends the lousy deal we already have. In most cases these unions are sell-outs who are really about controlling workers and throwing them crumbs rather than seizing the workplace and chunking out the bosses altogether.

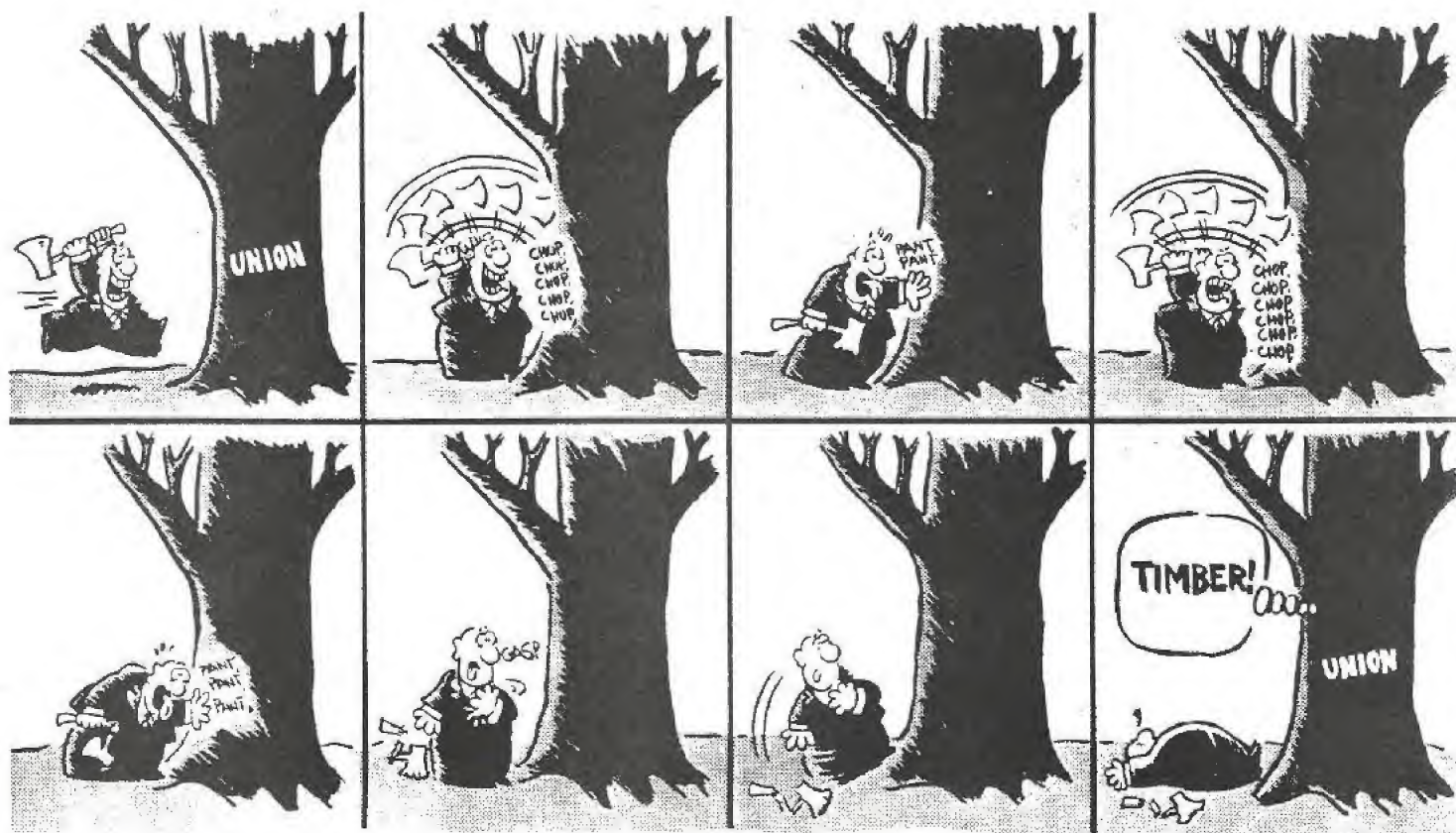
The unions WSA is talking about (anarchist unions) have no leaders, no paid officials and all decisions are made cooperatively. Their purpose is not only to get as much out of the bosses for workers as they can, but to fight for an end to capitalism and to realize our dreams of a free society, where living "happily ever after" isn't just the end of a children's fairy tale.

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NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE IWA

At present several of the largest IWA sections are experiencing internal turmoil on a drastic scale. The French CNT, for example, has split between two factions, known as the Paris-CNT and the Bordeaux-CNT. The most recent Congress of the IWA (December 1996) has taken the action of expelling the Paris faction, officially recognizing the Bordeaux faction as the legitimate IWA Section. However, there is still a great deal of controversy over this action.

Internal turmoil of this nature has also caused splits in both the Spanish and Italian sections of the IWA. WSA takes no sides in these splits, and calls on all involved to rise above their own grievances and think of the good of the world-wide syndicalist movement. Many new Sections of the IWA are being welcomed into the international, from the Czech Republic, former USSR, Nigeria, Bulgaria and elsewhere. Other groups from all around the globe have expressed interest in joining. This is no time to be splitting hairs (or Sections!), but a time to pool our energy and resources to build the kind of international workers movement that can challenge global capital and win.





We were nervous and we didn't know we could do it. Those machines had kept going as long as we could remember. When we finally pulled the switch and there was some quiet, I finally remembered something... that I was a human being, that I could stop those machines, that I was *better* than those machines anytime.

*—Sit-down striker
Akron, Ohio 1936*